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FLOOR DEBATE

May 8, 2001

LB 543

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. LB 543.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 543 on Final Reading. Senator Schimek would move to return the bill for specific amendment AM1905. (Legislative Journal page 1868.)

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Senator Schimek, you're recognized to open on AM1905...or, excuse me, on the motion to return to Select File for AM1905.

SENATOR SCHIMEK: Thank you very much, Mr. President and members. Lest we forget, I am introducing this motion to return so that some of us will have the opportunity to discuss the issue that we raised on the floor the other day, and this amendment that you have before you I don't intend to take to a vote. It is an amendment that essentially does the same thing that we said the other day and that was to return the monies to the budget that were for the regional centers, the Beatrice State Development Center, and the veterans' homes that the administration asked be cut from the budget, and it caused some concern not only among those in the Legislature who have been looking at this issue for quite awhile but also among those employees and the bargaining group for those employees. And just to refresh your memory, we, when we were discussing it on the floor the other day, did get a letter from the...from Ron Ross, I believe it was, outlining what they were going to do and we were at that time hopeful or expectant that maybe there would be some reopening of negotiations on the salaries for those care providers. And there was word received a couple of days ago that those negotiations were not going to be reopened. Now, I don't...I don't want to rehash everything that we talked about the other day, but I would like to point out to you that this has been going on since really the Legislative Session of 1999, when Senator Dwite Pedersen and Senator Chris Peterson introduced bills dealing with the administration of the veterans' homes. Government Committee chose not to act on those bills at the time, but instead decided to do interim studies, which we did that summer and we visited all those veterans' homes. The upshot of it was we concluded at that time, in 1999, that there was a severe problem with the retention and hiring of care providers in those facilities. We wrote to the Governor